

## Interview H0235: Surkhang Wangchen Gelek [tib. zur khang dbang chen dge legs], (USA, 1967) : Part No. 5 of 7

*The interviewee was one of the most important Tibetan government officials in modern Tibetan history. He served as a Kashag or Cabinet Minister (Kalön) from 1943-1959. He discusses Lungshar's speedy punishment due to the immanent arrival of Chinese officials (Huang Musung) to make offerings for the deceased Dalai Lama, and then his subsequent imprisonment, as well as the rise to power and the intrigues of the Regent, Reting Rimpoche, including the elimination of Trimön and the Silön.*

Q

[Note]: 27th September, continuation of interview, [Lungshar](#) after being put in prison.]

A

When [Lungshar](#) was shut up in the prison, the other 8 Kudrak were shut up in separate prisons. However, Sera and Drepung didn't hand over their two people and since it was very difficult for the government to go to arrest them. the government was saying that, "Even if they don't hand over their people, it will be okay if they don't cause other chaos and trouble. So just leave it for the time being." So they didn't say anything to the two monks.

Regarding the punishment, [Lungshar](#) was unlucky. If it was delayed for a long time, the people who knew [Lungshar](#) might help him because he had many colleagues. I think that if they did something to each person [Kudrak], he would not have to get the punishment of having his eyeballs gouged out. But he was unlucky. Huang Musung was coming with a delegation from the Chinese Government to make offerings for the deceased Dalai Lama [so they wanted the punishment done before Huang arrived]. They were coming via Kham and were far away, probably in Chamdo. But before that, a junior official called Zhang Caini was coming with a wireless [ch. wu [xian](#) dian] operator through India. Then

the government received a telegraph saying he had arrived at Gyantse and he will arrive Lhasa on such and such a date. If he arrived in Lhasa, the Tibetan pro-Lungshar people would go to him, and if he sent a telegraph to the Chinese Government, and if the Chinese Government said, "Please stop Lungshar's punishment for a little bit." this would have made the government have a very hard time. So they said that we must settle it right away before the Chinese arrive. That's why they did it fast.

The plan for gouging his eyeballs was made by the 4 investigators. When they asked the Tsondu, the Tsondu was dilly dallying [tib. nya re nye re]. I think all the members didn't want to have his eyeballs gouged out, but no one dared to say, "Do not gouge them" because [Lungshar](#) was dangerous. In the evening, the Tsondu agreed to this plan and put the seal on the document [tib. tshig tho] and said, "This is very good." [tib. da ga yag thag chod 'dug]. Then the Trungtsigye took it and submitted it to the Kashag.

However, the Trungtsigye could not go up to the Regent, so the Kashag said, "Well then, we will report this to the Regent." I heard that they submitted it. I didn't know on that day, but later I knew that on that night, the Kashag went to the Silön and then they went to the Regent. I heard that they told Reting, "Regarding [Lungshar](#), this is the plan that the investigators and all the Tsondu members have agreed to. We are going to gouge out his eyeballs. So Regent, please approve it." [tib. lung shar skor zhib dpyod pa dang tshogs 'du sgang ga bsam blo mthun pa'i 'char gzhi 'di red/ mig bton yag yin/ rgyal po rang gis phyag rtags rgyag rogs byed].

Reting also wanted to gouge his eyeballs, but he didn't want [the people] to say that he had them gouged out. so he said, "Although [Lungshar](#) is a very bad person and we certainly have to give him a severe punishment, since I am a monk and a lama it is not allowed in the Vinaya law of gelongs for me to give the approval for gouging out eyeballs. So I am not going to meddle into it and I don't have any suggestions. You can make whatever decision you want to make and I am not going to say anything" [tib. ma gzhi lung shar 'di mi zhe drag sdug cag red/ khirms tsha po cig gtan gtan gcod dgos rgyu red/ red de nga grwa pa dang bla ma red/ ngas mig bton zer yag gi thog la rtags rgyag yag 'di 'dul ba'i dge slong gi khirms nang chog gi yod ma red/ yin tsang nga 'dir jus gtogs rtsa nas med/ nga la bsam 'char yod ma red/ khyed rang tshos ga re yin na'i cig thag gcod rogs gngang/ ga re byas na'i 'grig gi red/ 'dir ngas ga ga'i lab kyi min].

Then it came to the Silön. He didn't have any serious dislike for [Lungshar](#), but he was timid [tib. snying med pa] and not that knowledgeable and everyone was passing off the responsibility up and down. Actually, he had the same rank as the regent, so he went

through the motions of being show-offish (tib. trog trog che [krog krog byas]) implying that he has the power and then he said, "What shall I do?" The Kashag wanted it to be done fast because [Trimön](#) and all of them didn't like [Lungshar](#). So they said, "If we don't do it fast and if people hear about that, it is not good and very dangerous, so we must do it right now." Then when it became dark, the Silön said, "Well then, here you go (tib. ona ya ya.[o na g.yag g.yag]) and he took the red ink and wrote the year, month and the date on the top and wrote the round thing on the word "okay" [tib. 'thus] with the red ink.

Then the [Shape](#) were extremely glad. The red ink was not yet dried. Usually the red ink would not dry right away so they would carry it carefully, but on that night, they thought that it will be okay so they wrapped the plan right away and the red ink smeared here and there, and it became messed up [tib. dza re [dzo](#) re]. But it didn't make any difference for them so long as they had that [the document with the Tsondu's seals and the Silön's notations].

On that night they called the investigators and told them that the approval was given so you can do that work. At that time, though the Commander-in-Chief [Tempa Jayang](#) had been in Lungshar's party, he didn't care about [Lungshar](#) when he himself became white [innocent]. He was a bad person. Then they sent the message saying, "Tomorrow, the investigators will meet in the [Shöl](#) Office (tib. [legung](#) [las khungs]), so put the cushions outside at the place called Sharteng [tib. shar steng], which was the place where they whipped people.

Also the investigators had given an order in advance to the [Shölpa](#) [tib. zhol pa], the ones in charge of the [Shöl](#) Office saying, "Call the Ragyapa [tib. rags rgyab pa], the low caste people who carried the bodies of the beggars [to the sky burial site] to come to gouge out the eyeballs." So the [Shölpa](#) were extremely scared and sent the message to the Ragyapa and told them that they have to come to gouge out eyeballs. Gouging eyeballs and cutting off hands were the duty of the Ragyapa, but this was the first time they had to do this in the [using English] 20th century. In the very early times, there used to do such things, but later such things never happened. There was no such thing during the 13th Dalai Lama reign.

The Ragyapa said that there is no one who knows how to do this, so what shall we do? Then I heard that they sent about 4-5 people who were kind of the worse [tib. sdug pa] ones among the Ragyapa. They said that they need shin bones of sheep for gouging eyeballs and they placed the shin bones here [on the temples]. If one tied these with a rope, then the eyeballs would come out. The Ragyapa were preparing for that. Then

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[Lungshar](#) was brought down by soldiers carrying guns and Lungshar's hands were put in a locked wooden handcuffs called Ante [tib. an gtad]. And they also tied him with the rope and people were holding the end of the rope. [Lungshar](#) was wearing a satin [chupa](#) and it was not taken off. Usually he would wear very good [chupa](#) underneath. I heard that he was coming like this. [Lungshar](#) probably thought that he is going to be whipped in [Shöl](#). I heard that he didn't think his eyeballs will be gouged out.

Then when [Lungshar](#) came there, among the investigators, [Lukhangwa](#) read the sentence plan and when he said, "You did this and that, right?" [Lungshar](#) was staying there [saying nothing]. Then [Lungshar](#) was told, "According to your crimes, it is a crime for getting capital punishment, but today, the government is going to treat you leniently and give you a small punishment" [tib. khyod rang gi nyes pa la bltas na/ srog gi yes pa gcod dgos nges kyang/ de ring sde pa gzhung gis yang po byas nas nyes pa chung chung zhig gton gi yin] At this time, [Lukhangwa](#) said in a low voice like murmuring, "You have been imprisoned in [Shöl](#) legung." [tib. khyod rang zhol las khungs la btson la 'jug yin]. [Lungshar](#) didn't hear that, which was good for him.

Then the investigators went back and told the [Shölpa](#) to gouge out his eyeballs, but [Lungshar](#) didn't hear that. Then they shut him up in the prison which was downstairs. As soon as he was brought there, they had boiled mustard oil over there to put in the eye sockets and there were a lot of liquor which probably was a custom to do that. Then [Lungshar](#) said, "What is that liquor for. I don't drink liquor." They said, "No, Kungö, you drink it." and they served him lot of liquor and he became like drunk and then those people pressed him on his stomach and [Lungshar](#) said "Ah" and they put a lot of liquor into his mouth and then they gouged out his eyeballs. At that time, he didn't feel much and as soon as they gouged out the eyeballs, they poured hot mustard oil in his sockets. Then they put him in the prison where they had made a place for him to sleep. He had fainted like people who had an [using English] accident, and he couldn't talk. The next morning, when the day had almost broken, he was yelling, "A tsha, A tsha. [a cry of pain from heat or burning]" Then when they told the [Shölpa](#) that he is yelling a lot, they called kind of doctor and gave him a some medicine. He yelled "a tsha" for many days, probably, for a week and then he recovered slowly and stayed in the prison.

According to the original plan, it was life imprisonment, but after two years, all of Lungshar's wealth was sealed, but the wealth of the other Kudrak's was not sealed. At this time, I heard that his real wife, who was the mother of Changchu La [tib. byang 'chub lags], didn't treat him well and she just brought him a little bit of food in the prison and didn't

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bring him much. However, Lady Lhalu Lhajam [tib. lha klu lha lcam] who was Lungshar's girl friend, brought him very good food and treated him very nicely. And Lhalu Lhajam did something for the regent Reting to get [Lungshar](#) released from the prison and to have his wealth returned. This was done by using money. At that time, the Regent probably was saying, "I didn't know about that. I didn't gouge out his eyeballs. They gouged it out. [Lungshar](#) is not be blamed." So one day, they said "Lungshar must sign a pledge saying that in the future he will not be involved in [using English] politics and we will release him from the prison." So he was released and was taken to Lhalu's house, not to his home. At that time, there were many riders and his horse was led by one person. His horse was well-saddled and he was wearing a very good [chupa](#) and a white felt [hat](#) and sun glasses. He went to Lhalu like a rich Kudrak with many servants. Also, Lungshar's wealth was also returned to his real wife.

Q

Did he also get the estate's back?

A

Yes. And he also had a son with a twisted mouth (tib. porkyog [spor kyog]), but at that time it was decided that his sons would not be allowed to become lay officials right away. Before that, they had untied the head knot (tib. pajog [spa lcog]) of Lungshar's son Lhalusey [tib. lha klu sras] and he was expelled from the Senampa rank of lay officials, but Lhalu Lhajam told a lie and said that he is not the son of [Lungshar](#), he is the son of Chönden la's grandfather Shelkar Lingpa [tib. shel dkar gling pa].

This was because in the past Lungshar's wife had many boyfriends [tib. khyo ga] and one of them was also our father. And Shelkar Lingpa was also one of them. At that time, Shelkar Lingpa was the [Trapchi](#) (Regiment's) Depön (Commander). Although Lhalu looks very much like [Lungshar](#) and you could know from the blood, but they didn't go to the [using English] blood bank. Then the Kashag called Shelkar Lingpa and asked him, "They are saying that you are the father of Lhalusey, is that true? If it is true, can you put your seal on the pledge?" He said, "Yes, I am." So since the father and the mother said yes, it was okay. If they asked [Lungshar](#) if Lhalusey is his son or not, and if he said yes, he will not get the lay official position. [Lungshar](#), however, would not say that Lhalusey is his son, because he needs the lay official position, right? So [Lungshar](#) also said that he is not my son. Then the government told Shelkar Lingpa to put his seal [on the statement] and after

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putting the seal, Lhalusey became a lay official again. The other sons could not become lay officials for a long time because the Regent Reting didn't let Changchu La become a lay official.

After [Lungshar](#) had his downfall, Reting held the main power in Tibet, followed by [Trimön](#). Reting's power increased like from 30% to 95%, and he also became kind of arrogant (tib. trog trog [krog krog ]) and a kind of [using English] hero. He (Trimön) became very powerful and scolded everyone. Before that, [Trimön](#) was nice and friendly with the Kudrak and made friends with everyone because he was in danger. But at that time, he no longer needed friends and he bullied everyone and didn't act cleverly. So some people were saying, "Is the regent more powerful or is [Trimön](#) more powerful?" The regent was very smart, so he left him [Trimön] like that for awhile.

One year after Lungshar's eyeballs were gouged out, one day Reting told [Trimön](#), "Come to my place." These were all private/internal talks, not [using English] official talks. Reting told [Trimön](#), "As for me, I don't know much about political work. Probably, I should resign from being the regent of Tibet." [tib. ngas chab srid kyi las ka zhe po shes kyi mi 'dug/ nga bod kyi rgyal po nas dgongs pa zhu dgos min 'gro]. Then [Trimön](#) said, "That is impossible! You are a very good regent. It is not okay at all for you to resign. Please do not resign." Then Reting said, "If I don't resign I have to do everything by myself because the Silön does not know much about [using English] politics and you know a great deal about [using English] politics. It might be very good if you come up as the Silön's partner [tib. rogs pa]" So [Trimön](#) felt kind of [using English] proud and he said, "I can't do this big work. So may I serve in the Kashag diligently." They ate together and drank tea together and became like friends, and Reting told a lot of things to [Trimön](#), saying, "You know a great deal so please teach me." Then the regent told [Trimön](#), "What is that for? the government is very strange. There aren't any people like you who have made great accomplishments (tib. cheje [byas rjes])." It was like being a [using English] hero. It is like Sir William [sic. Winston] Churchill made great accomplishments for the British during the Second World War.

Q

Does this (cheje) mean famous (tib. kedra [skad grags])?

A

No. It was called accomplishments, cheje. If a soldier fought the battle well and when he came back and they will say he had cheje. Then the regent told [Trimön](#), "But you are as



same as the other [Shape](#) and you have not been given a big estate (shiga). Why didn't the government help you? That is very strange. You really need something special that is different than the others" So [Trimön](#) was kind of glad and told the regent, "I thought about it, but I didn't dare to report it to you. Otherwise, my estates are poor." Then the regent said, "You shouldn't do like this. You write a petition and submit it to the Kashag, and I will give you a good estate. You can ask for whatever kind of estate you want."

At that time, the Regent's plan worked out. According to the custom in Tibet, when you ask something for an accomplishment, first you have to say, "I am old, please allow me to resign." And then if I say I don't have many estates, so please give me an estate, they will say "no" for the resignation and the estate will be granted. The purpose of resigning was to make the estates bigger. This is similar to someone saying I am going to resign and they say don't resign, we will raise your salary. The regent had thought about what [Trimön](#) would ask and what he was going to do.

Then he submitted the petition to the Kashag and since all the Sawangs were Trimön's friends and it was a custom to ask to resign, they didn't have other thoughts because it was like people in India saying, "by the grace of the Dalai Lama" [tib. yid bzhin nor bu'i thugs rje bka' drin]. However, the Sawangs were wondering what estate [Trimön](#) wanted. When they asked him which estate do you want to ask for, [Trimön](#) said, "Please give me the Kashi Nubling [tib. bka' gzhis nub gling] estate that is located in the Gyantse area." It was a good and a big estate. Then the Shapes said that that will be good. One day [Trimön](#) didn't come to the Kashag and the other Sawangs said that [Trimön](#) really has made great accomplishments, so we must definitely give him the estate and they told [Trimön](#), "Please keep on being a [Shape](#) as long as your age permits. We will not grant you your resignation. But since you just have only a few estate, Kashi Nubling is given to you from generation to generation, even for thousands of years [tib. ji srid nam gnas]" When this plan came to the regent, the regent was strange and very smart. What should I say? He was strange and bad and he left the wording regarding his accomplishments and for the words "we will not grant your resignation" he wrote "although it is very regretful to grant you your resignation, you have been doing a lot of work and you are tired and also elderly. Therefore, this time, you will be treated specially and your resignation is granted."

Q

Did he give him the estate?

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A

Yes, he did. It was like a [using English] present when he left and to say [using English] bye bye. This was because he [Trimön] was [using English] competing with the Regent himself, so the Regent wanted to fire him. But he didn't let people fire him and made [the plan] to fire him by two of them [regent and Trimön] discussing it. When this approval (tib. gomchen ['go mchan] came to the Kashag, all the Shapes were astonished but they also liked it because [Trimön](#) was a powerful [using English] boss above them and after that they became the boss. So all were happy and they discussed what to do. Then they made a new copy and put the Kashag's seal on it and send a Kadrung to deliver it to [Trimön](#). On that day, [Trimön](#) didn't come to the Kashag. Usually he did not come to the Kashag every time because he was old.

The Kadrung went to Trimön's house and took off his [hat](#) in the traditional salutation (tib. chambü [phyag 'bul] and told him that they [Kashag] have told me to deliver the message to you that your approval has come. The Kadrung told him only that and then came back. I heard that the servants said that after [Trimön](#) read the approval document, he told his wife, [Trimön](#) Lhajam [Deyang](#) La [tib. bde dbyangs lags] who was a talkative [tib. kha mang po] woman, "Fortunately my resignation is granted" [tib. stabs yag/ nga dgongs pa 'khrol 'dug ga]. She said, "Oh Kungö! Did you say that your resignation is granted?" [Trimön](#) said "Yes. Previously I asked for permission to resign and now it has been granted." Then his wife said, "Oh my! That which is called the government has acted despicable!" [tib. 'o tsi la/ sde pa gzhang zer mkhan 'di'i byed stangs nyes pa la ang].

However, [Trimön](#) said, "Though my resignation has been granted, they will not say anything if I just [continue to] go to the Kashag." So from the next day, he went to the Kashag and everyone didn't dare to say anything to him. Since he was seated at the head, the people coming in to see the Kashag all went to him. Nobody told him, "Your resignation is granted so you must leave" And he came like that for many days. Then the Regent heard about that and he was surprised and thought why is he doing that? But he [the Regent] didn't know how to expel him because those two had been friendly.

So the regent was thinking about what to do and I don't know if he himself got the idea or if someone else told him, but he got a new idea. Usually, the Shapes had only 4 cushions (for sitting on) as well as one more that was called the "additional" [Shape](#) (tib. lenbar [las 'phar]). The additional [Shape](#) was Trenthongnga [tib. bkras mthong ba] who had just come back from Kham. He had a separate cushion. The cushions of the [Shape](#) were made of



green serge (tib. gonam [sgo snam]). The lower ranking Shape's [the lenbar's] cushion was made from satin. The green cushion was said to be very powerful and the Kudrak would say we have to sit on the green cushions. At that time, Trenthongnga was sitting on the satin cushion. So he [the Regent] thought that if they make him [Trenthongnga] a real [tib. ngo ma] [Shape](#), then he [Trimön] might leave. Therefore, one day the Regent told the Kashag to, "Submit a plan for making the [Shape](#) lenbar Trenthongnga into a real [Shape](#)." At that time [Trimön](#) was there, but he didn't say anything. Then one day they did the plan in which they wrote, "In replacement for [Kalön](#) Trimön who had asked to resign, [Kalön](#) lenbar Trenthongnga is appointed." This was done to give a warning to [Trimön](#). On the morning of the [using English] ceremony of Trenthongnga, the Regent probably told them to change the cushion. So the [Shape](#) sitting below [Trimön](#) sat on Trimön's cushion and the one sitting next, sat on that cushion and then they collected Trenthongnga's cushion. Probably, [Trimön](#) heard that, so after that he didn't come and then he was very unhappy and was thinking what shall I do.

One day a Tsondu gyendzom (Full Assembly) was held in the Potala to discuss the matter of the mission of Huang Musung who had come to Tibet, he said, to make the offerings for the deceased Dalai Lama. He asked for the permission to hoist their [Chinese] flag on the Potala and we told him this is not allowed. After they got rid of [Lungshar](#), the representatives of [Sendregasum](#) and those rubbish people [tib. dza re [dzo](#) re] no longer came and only the abbots came. Thus, the discipline of the Tsondu was good and all people didn't say reckless things and all behaved well. At that time, [Trimön](#) sent a message to the Tsondu saying, "Trimön is coming to the Tsondu." This astonished everyone, but they couldn't tell him not to come because he was an old Kudrak. So then they said, "Well then, where shall we put his cushion?" So they put it at the head like a kind of throne." I was at that Tsondu. When [Trimön](#) came, everyone sat at their place and he sat on the cushion. So people were wondering whether he might say that he wants to work again, but he didn't say that. He talked a lot about the customs and how they did things in the past when the Chinese officials came. The Tsondu members said that what Sawangchemo said is good and on that day, he returned home. After that they didn't need to hold the Tsondu, so [Trimön](#) didn't get the chance to come to the Kashag. Since then he was finished.

Since [Trimön](#) was finished, the Regent was very powerful. During the Reting regency, the [Kalön](#) Lama Chöthar la died. He was old and the replacement [Kalön](#) Lama was Trekhang, who was then the [Tseja](#). This was because Trekhang was knowledgeable and was a very

nice person and furthermore, their former generations were [standing] as one[tib. gcig pa red]. When the former Reting Regent lost his power, Trekhang was a lay [Shape](#). He was related to the former Reting Regent so Trekhang and Reting Labrang were friends from several [using English] generations. Therefore, when Reting became the regent, promoting Trekhang was like [promoting] one's family member.

Trekhang, however, didn't act arrogantly and was doing his work very nicely, but he had a fault. At that time, the Regent was doing a lot of trade and was doing a lot for money [taking bribes] when Kudrak were appointed to positions. The other Shapes were smart and they let the Regent do whatever he was doing and didn't point out his faults and tell him he was doing wrong. Trekhang, however, acted like he was the parent [of the Regent] and told him, "It is not good for you to do such large-scale trading which is causing great difficulties for the peasants (miser). Reting Labrang should not send traders everywhere, so please stop doing such trade."

Also when the Regent appointed a Kudrak to a position, Trekhang would tell him, "That person is not good and because he has lots of money, he gave you something. This is wrong. " When [Kapshöba](#) was given the position of Tsipön, Trekhang told him [the Regent], "This was wrong. You should not appoint these position indiscriminately (tib. gangchung mangchung [gang byung mang byung]). At that time there were many undistinguished people like the young favorites [of Reting] such as Bönshösey [tib. bon shod sras] and Jogtre [tib. lcogs spras]. Also some Lhasa Muslims traders were coming to the Regent and were able to talk with him. So Trekhang was telling him [regent] that it is not good to have these undistinguished people coming to the Regent. So the Regent didn't like this, but since Trekhang was famous and a nice person, he couldn't demote him. Therefore, one day the Regent told Trekhang. "One [Shape](#) has to go to Kham, so you, Trekhang must go." At that time Trekhang was old and it was hard for him to go to such a long distance to Kham.

That was the time when the Communists caused disturbances in China and had to run away on their 25,000 mile "Long March." This was the time when Zhu De was coming to the Kham area. So Trekhang didn't want to go to Kham and told the Regent, "Please, may I not go to Kham." This angered the Regent who said "If an internal person doesn't adhere to my orders, how would outside people adhere to them? This is unbelievable [tib. gang min tshad red]. You must go to Kham. but if you are not going to Kham, then you must resign from the position of [Shape](#). If you resign, I will leave your [Shape](#) title. If you don't resign, then I am going to demote you." This was because the Regent had felt

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embarrassed when Trekhang pointed out his faults to him. If the Regent had listened to what Trekhang said, Reting Labrang would not have the misfortunes he did have, and he would have been the Regent as before and everyone would have liked him and he would not have needed to appoint [Taktra](#) as the Regent, and he would not have had to get imprisoned and lose his wealth. He [Reting] didn't listen to Trekhang and made a [using English] mistake.

Trekhang, therefore, didn't have any choice but to resign because he didn't want to go to Kham because he was old, so he told the Regent, "I want to go into retreat, so please grant me the resignation." So the Regent said, "[using English] Okay, you are good and now you are an ex-Shape so he could be seated with the Shapes at parties, but didn't have any [using English] political position. Reting then appointed [Tempa Jayang](#) as the new [Shape](#). This person was very cunning and had followed [Lungshar](#) when he was powerful, but when [Lungshar](#) was no longer powerful, he followed the Regent. [Tempa Jayang](#) himself was taking bribes from the peasants and was telling the Regent to take bribes. Later, when Reting left the regency, at first he acted friendly, but when [Taktra](#) got the regency, he sided with [Taktra](#).

Q

Who else was in the Kashag then?

A

There was [Bönshö](#), Nagchungnga and Trenthongnga.

Q

What was [Bönshö](#) like?

A

He was extremely smart. His main good point (tib. yönten [yon tan]) was that he would never harm anybody. Tsarong [tib. tsha rong] was also like that. But [Lungshar](#) would help one side a lot and harm the other side a lot. [Bönshö](#) was treating all people nicely and was not at all show-offish.

Q

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Did the regent himself nominate the Commander-in-Chief as the [Kalön](#) Lama or did the Kashag nominate him?

A

He was nominated by the [Yigtsang](#) Office. When a [Kalön](#) Lama died, they would not appoint the new one right away. They would not talk about it until 49 days had passed. After that, when the Trunyichemmos came to the Kashag, the Kashag told the [Yigtsang](#), "We need a [Kalön](#) Lama. Why are you not nominating one even now? So please do it fast, we have a lot of work to do and we can't handle the work. The Trunyichemmos would say, "Yes, yes." Usually, the Trunyichemmos would submit the names of the two senior [Trunyichemmo](#) and about 5-7-9 other monk officials to the Regent and ask the Regent to do a divination (tib. thugtham [thugs dam]). They do divinations for the [Shape](#), [Jigyab khempo](#) and the [Kalön](#) Lama, and they would submit the names of many people to be chosen. Then the Dalai Lama or the Regent would say, "In my divination, so and so came out as better." And then they regarded this one as the first candidate and a second candidate could be anyone chosen indiscriminately. The first candidate will be approved. For the other positions there was no divination.

Q

Did they really do the divination?

A

[laughter] They write in the note [tib. yi ge] "From among the names mentioned below, I did divination in detail as to who has the karmic result to be the [Kalön](#) and it came out to be so and so who will be better with respect to the present and long term future." [tib. gsham gsal bka' blon gyi las skal su 'os brtag pa zhi zhib tu bgyis par jig jig jig 'phral phugs 'phrod lam bzang bar bab] and then it became [using English] official.

Q

At that time, did the Regent tell the [Yigtsang](#) that he needs this and that person?

A

No, he didn't. Usually, the [Yigtsang](#) would write the names of one Drönyerchemmo, one Talama [tib. tab la ma] or one Magji and about 1-2 [Trunyichemmo](#). And from among

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the Khenche [tib. mkhan che], 1-2 knowledgeable ones and from the Dzasa also. At that time, the Regent said, "It came out that [Tempa Jayang](#) will be better with respect to the present and long term future." And it doesn't make any difference who will be the second candidate.

Q

Usually, how many names would they submit?

A

At most about 7-9 names. Usually, they list 2 candidates. They would not put 3 candidates's names. The first was called wö [tib. 'os] and the second was called wöndra ['os 'dra]. But for the Tsogchen [Shengo](#), they put up 5 candidates.

When [Tempa Jayang](#) became the [Kalön](#) Lama, he acted cleverly (tib. khepo [mkhas po]) and let Reting Labrang do whatever it was doing. After Reting regent fired the person who gave him the advice, then there was nobody who gave advice to him. But in their house, there was an old Reting Labrang Dzasa who gave advice to him. He was called Chandzö and he was the Nyerpa (steward) when Reting first came to the Labrang. When Reting was 10-15 old, the Nyerpa had already become the Dzasa and he was serving Reting very nicely and he was knowledgeable and s famous person though his writing was not that good. This person didn't like it when many new friends came to the Regent and reported all sort of rubbish things. And when Reting was doing trade all the time and doing things for money when appointing positions he didn't like this. He also didn't like it when the bad Kudraks came. So he might have been talking internally and using the words like it will be shameful if you do that. Please don't do that. So the Regent was not happy at all.

One day, probably he told the Dzasa, "It is slightly not okay [tib. tog tsam 'grig gi ma red] for you to stay here because you are old. So you must go to the Chang (Northern nomad country). I will give you the title of ex-Dzasa [tib. zur pa]. You can enjoy yourself in Chang as you wish. You people have an old brain, so you don't know about the new customs." This was like sending him to [using English] exile. But the Dzasa told Reting, "It doesn't make any difference for me because I am just thinking of [helping] you." So he went to Chang. Actually, he was very happy in Chang where there was no [using English] politics. Then he [Reting] appointed one of his relatives who was 26 years as the Dzasa. He used to go riding trotters and got dressed up and was show-offish (.

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Then there was a lama [named Nyungne Lama [tib. snyung gnas bla ma]] who was very smart and brave and he was also quite old. He had gone to Dakhural (Ulan Baator) in [using English] Outer Mongolia and he was there when the [using English] Russians first came there. So he knew a lot about foreign countries and he became the very best friend of Reting. He was the head person in charge of [Reting's] trading business (tib. tsongi jig-yab [tshong gi spyi khyab]).

At that time, Reting Labrang also became like two governments; the old government was there collecting the taxes from the peasants (miser) and providing foods to their people and probably they didn't have much money. And down there in the office of that lama, he had things like [using English] typewriters and transistors and all those things and all the people were little bit educated. And there was a clerk for foreign languages and they sent many telegraphs to the trade office in Kalimpong, India regarding the wool trade and did the [using English] export and the import work, etc. The head person in charge of this was Nyungne Lama, and he was teaching the regent very much about [using English] politics. At that time he was very powerful and everyone was afraid of Nyungne Lama, although he didn't have any position in the government. People were saying that he is the most important person.

In Reting Labrang, only Nyungne Lama was knowledgeable. The others were not knowledgeable and were like children. They didn't know what are their faults. And they only heard from one ear saying Reting regent is good and there is a good rain fall and our [using English] economy is developing and there are no diseases and war in Tibet. They didn't hear anything about the Reting Labrang taking bribes and not doing good things regarding religion and many people were poor and the taxes were hard, etc. So he [Reting] thought that all people were happy and Reting always enjoyed a happy life. But the peasants (miser) had a very hard time and the servants of Reting [answer not finished]

Q

Were there any (street) songs [about Reting]?

A

There was only one song saying that, "the goat did something to the tiger" [tib. rwa yi stag la gcig byas]. This was after Reting had been eliminated. Even the small servants of Reting were acting very show-offish and they held many [dzong](#) of the government like Nyemo Mönkhar Dzong [tib. snye mo smon mkhar rdzong]. When Lhalu became



Senampa, they offered the Nyemo Mönkhar estate to Reting. Then there was a big [dzong](#) called Tagtse [tib. stag rtse] Dzong where a lay official used to be the Dzongpön, but Reting Labrang said they wanted it and they sent a clerk who was a show-offish person to manage the [dzong](#).

At that time, there was [the lay official named] Tsögo [tib. mtsho sgo] Depön. He was famous for his bravery when they fought the war in Kham in 1918. He was same age as my father. He went to Kham and stayed there for many years. At that time, he asked to resign from the position of Depön because of health problems and Reting granted his resignation which was a real one, not just one for getting an estate. When he came back with many soldiers as his servants, all the [dzong](#) on his route served him well for accommodations and for providing corvée horses, etc. However, when he arrived at Tagtse Dzong, they didn't arrange the accommodations well and they didn't send the corvée horses right away. When he asked, "Why aren't you sending the corvée horses since I have the travelling document [tib. lam yig]?" They said that now Tagtse Dzong belongs to Reting Labrang and they were talking about "Kungö [dzongpön](#)." Therefore, Tsögo said, "You are really spoiled! (tib. kyaglang shorwa re [skyag lang shor ba red]). Call the [dzongpön](#) here." The [dzongpön](#) was the clerk of Reting Labrang who was not a lay official, but more [using English] proud than a fourth rank official. He said "I can't come now because I am very busy and I have told the peasants (miser) about your accommodations."

When they told Tsögo that he was busy, Tsögo said, "I just have to meet him and tell him something, so tell him to come here." After quite a long time, the clerk came in an imposing (tib. dzig po [rdzig po]) manner wearing a long earring. Tsögo was matchless (tib. yamey [ya med]) and very brave and he didn't have children. When the clerk came in he didn't take off his [hat](#) nicely to salute him because he was from Reting Labrang and Tsögo was a Depön who had asked to resign. The clerk said in a sassy manner (tib. kha gyagpa [kha rgyags pa]) "Kungö, we have made your accommodations." Then Tsögo said, "You are really spoiled! I went to Kham and fought many battle with the Chinese and I sacrificed my life and served the government. If you don't adhere to the government travel document (lamyig) when I have come near Lhasa, that is too much! (tib. [gang](#) mintse re [gang min tshad red]). The clerk was saying, "Even though Reting Labrang is in a bad situation, he is the regent of Tibet." [tib. rwa sgrenng bla brang thabs dug na yang/ bod kyi rgyal po red]. But Tsögo said, "Reting Labrang is the regent, but you are the [dzongpön](#) here. I am not saying anything to the Regent. I am telling you something." Then the clerk still said

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something sassy, so Tsögo told the soldiers to catch him. The soldiers were brave and were doing whatever the Depön told them to do because the Depön was short-tempered and there is the danger of getting shot.

When they first caught him, he was still impudent (tib. kyagtre shö [skyag khral shod]), but then some caught his legs and some caught his head and took off his trousers and Tsögo told them to bring the whip and Tsögo himself whipped him about 100 times with a very long whip. When he was whipped about 50 times, the [dzongpön](#) was yelling "Kungö, please have mercy on me. Please, please don't beat me" [tib. sku ngo thugs rjes gzigs/ sku mkhyen sku mkhyen/ nga nyes dag ma gtong rogs byed]. After whipping him about 100 times, Tsögo said, "Get out of here! If you still don't behave well, I will teach you a lesson" [tib. rgyu ma kas/ da dung yag po ma byas na/ ngas bzo ta sprod kyi yin]. Then he went back and arranged the accommodation nicely.

When Tsögo arrived in Lhasa he reported his arrival (tib. jorcha ['byor phyag]) and the regent didn't have anything to say because what Tsögo did was according to the customs. Since he was not a lay official then, the regent didn't have anything to accuse him. Tsögo stayed like this for about 2-3 years. Then after 2 years, there was the government big picnic called (tib. chabshug [chab zhugs]) on the 2nd, 3rd and the 4th of 8th lunar month. All the Kudrak would go to [Norbulinga](#) and eat many different foods and sometimes the lay officials who had resigned would also come. This rule was made by the 13th Dalai Lama who was very smart and was able to think about the resigned officials. Even if they were staying a long distance away, like 3-4 days journey on horseback, they would have to come after they got the notice. There was some food and fried cookies given out. The Dalai Lama didn't care much about the distance. For example, the lay official Doring [tib. rdo ring] was called from [Tsang](#) [tib. gtsang] and there was a very old lay official [Shakabpa](#) who later became a monk and was staying on an estate. He was called to the picnic and they brought him on a kind of palanquin. It was just to eat some food and for some people it was hard, but this was kind of imposing [tib. nyams] because they came as the guest of the Dalai Lama.

So Tsögo heard about this and thought it might be okay for him to go to the picnic because he was a Depön, even though he didn't receive the [using English] invitation. The other people didn't say anything and he went to the picnic for 3 days. Then, probably, one of Reting Labrang's people said that Tsögo came to the picnic although he had already resigned, so the regent was extremely glad because he found something with which to accuse Tsögo, who was his enemy. So the Regent told the Nendrön to call Tsögo and ask

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him why he came without [using English] an invitation. When the Nendrön asked him why he came without [using English] an invitation, Tsögo said, "Since I am an old lay official, I thought that I was allowed to come to the picnic." So when they submitted the plan to the Regent, the Regent said, "You have violated the custom by coming to the picnic without the [using English] invitation, so you have to prostrate for one week at the Trungja tea event in [Norbulinga](#)." The prostrations would be for about 50 minutes to an hour. This was his [using English] punishment for having whipped [the clerk] with 50 lashes.